On hot evenings Hassan would provide me with a silk *kufieyh* or Arab gown—which I wore in place of my jacket and shirt; this is a loose, cool garment, ideal for desert conditions and climate. We would sit in rattan chairs on the roof overlooking the sea, sipping the delicious clove-flavoured coffee and discussing philosophy, belles-lettres, or the humanities. Because of his wide reading and understanding, Hassan could see life from the European as well as from the Arab point of view, and his interpretations of Arab mentality and character helped me considerably to understand his people.

Most of the Arab tribes in south-east Arabia are extremely strict in their interpretation of the Koran but, as with the followers of other religions, there are exceptions to this rule. Many who profess and call themselves good Moslems are extremely unorthodox in practice. The fast of Ramadan is, without exception, vigilantly observed by all Mohammedans, but a great many Arabs, especially those of the merchant class, fail to observe the stern tenets of the Prophet. Prayers are dutifully said at the prescribed hours, especially at sunset, when the faithful perform their genuflections and prostrations with religious zeal. But the middle and upper classes are rather liberal in their religious ideas. It is not uncommon for an Arab to smoke, even in public. The younger men prefer Turkish or Egyptian cigarettes, although most of the native shops in Sharjah and Dubai were well stocked with 'Lucky Strike', 'Camels' and 'Players', the source of these supplies being traceable to the U.S. and the R.A.F. canteens. The troops had no scruples about selling their rations for cash.

The older men would smoke native-grown tobacco in tiny pipes scarcely bigger than an acorn cup. After a few short puffs the brittle leaf would crumble into ashes, but they seemed to derive such pleasure from these brief smokes, perhaps because the leaf was tinctured with hashish. After use the pipe is placed in a small sheepskin pouch, which the Arabs carry about in the folds of their *abbas*, or gowns. The hubble-bubble is a Turkish innovation, used largely by the Persians and Parsees, and a crude form of this pipe is manufactured in Oman and sold in the bazaars.

The Arab seldom touches alcohol, and it is an offence to distil, import or drink it in Sharjah territory. Nevertheless, a certain amount of bad Indian gin is brought in by the ships, and arrack is certainly distilled by the Indians in secret. I have never seen an Arab in these parts drink spirits, although an American officer once

2: O'Shea G-3 (1944-1945) 1947 MK4 Trucial Oman MK4

told me that he had persuaded a lesser sheikh to drink a bottle of rye.

A Shiekh, it may be explained, is another name for Chief, although nowadays many of these petty rulers regard themselves as Princes; their desert forts have become palaces, and the advisers and secretaries who form the 'court' have been elevated to the rank of Ministers. This local grandeur is self-assumed, and the only genuine Prince in the Oman peninsula is the Sultan of Muscat. The Bedouins jokingly refer to the town sheikhs as 'Sand Kings', and the description seems to be an apt one.

The word 'sheikh' is fairly common as a name in Arabia, although it does not connote royal blood or connexions; we had a coolie in the Fort who was called Sheikh Ahmed. Similarly, the word 'Saiyed' is much used as a name, but bears no relation to the title Saiyed, borne by alleged lineal descendants of the Prophet or his son-in-law.

The Arab world has practised the doctrines of Islam for close on thirteen centuries, yet even to-day one finds the people accepting ancient beliefs and superstitions which are the heritage of heathenism. The uneducated Arab firmly believes in the existence of djinns, and nothing will persuade him to venture near a *wadhi* or deserted building which tradition has made the home of these monsters. Good and bad luck are ascribed by the faithful to Allah, Whose ways are wise and inscrutable; yet even the orthodox will admit—a trifle shamefacedly, perhaps—that such and such a calamity was caused by a malicious djinn, or that the death of his favourite camel was due to the evil eye of a neighbour.

Demoniacal possessions are cured by dancing to the throb of drums, a survival, surely, of African rites, and it is significant that most of these primitive beliefs are held by Arabs of African or negro descent. But then, is there such a thing as a pure-blooded Arab? I have heard people describe themselves as being pure-blooded Irish, although they had less claim to consanguine purity than myself; they took no account of the Danish, Norman, Spanish and English invasions which swept the length and breadth of that small island over a thousand years. Just as the Irishman is basically Celt, the Arab is basically Semitic, but even the greatest ethnologist or anthropologist cannot track down with absolute certainty the ultimate origins of the Arab race; if it is one race. Head-measurements and the division of skulls into brachycephalic and dolchycephalic are all very well; they are useful for classifying the human